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a Humperdido! scan

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Snake - The Gunfight at KO Corral © Editions Alain Michel

HEAVY METAL

Publishers Note:

Excuse me— has anybody else out there blinked, then wondered where most of the year 2000 has gone?

Geez Louise, has it ever flown by— it seems like only yesterday we were fighting off the mob of fans at the San Diego Comic Convention who had travelled from all over the globe to get autographs from Julie Strain, Arban, and Simon Bisley who were signing at the Heavy Metal booth. Now, we're looking through the back of the closet for the winter boots!

It's been quite an intense year for us, which is probably why it seems to have gone by so fast— with the Heavy Metal 2000 soundtrack hitting the streets in April, the movie on STARZ! in July, and the Heavy Metal FAKK2 video game in August and there's still months to go! By the time you read this the VHS and DVD of the film will be close to its release date, as at press time the folks at Columbia have told me that October 17th will be the official "On Sale" date for both. By the way, I recommend the DVD big time, as there is just tons and tons of extra stuff...

Speaking of tons of great stuff, you're going to love this issue! At long last we've got the latest installment of Frezzato's "The Keepers Of The Maser" and couldn't be more thrilled! It's really been amazing to watch fans interest in this continuing series grow and grow over the years, especially knowing that they often are waiting a year between installments!

In addition to welcoming back one of our favorite cover artists, Luis Royo to the front of this issue, we've got some favorites on the inside as well. We'll always find room for Heavy Metal classics like Altuna, Giardino, Caza, as well as Bernet & Abuli with all new characters and adventures, but we luckily still have plenty of room for some of the "new" regulars like Kofoed, Ricci and Matthias Beeguer!

Lots of cool stuff, and I, as always hope to get feedback from you on what we're doing over here, and what you like or don't— I think if you check out the letters section this time, you'll see we're getting some strong reaction from fans on a bunch of different subjects, and I hope it will inspire you to get your thoughts to me.

Anyway, I'm getting a signal from the folks up in the control booth that I'm out of time and space, and really should wrap this up— so I'll thank you once again for taking us for a ride and I'll be back to taunt you soon.

Best,

Kevin Eastman

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear H.M.,

In response to KTT's letter in the May 2000 issue, I couldn't agree more. What's the problem, Kevin? I've been a loyal reader of HM since the mid 80's and I always considered its major selling point to be the fact that it was uncensored. What made the stories and art stand out from the garbage on the comic racks was that it didn't condescend to its readers by "cleaning up" its content. By the recent bowdlerizing of your stories, you're undermining what I've always thought to be the whole point of HM— to appeal to a readership that is mature enough to handle a little sex and nudity without suffering mental trauma. So where did this censorship b.s. come from? Is it because the magazine is printed in Canada? Is it because you're using a new distributor? Tell me who's behind this, so I can nail my complaints to their front door. I want the old, no-holds-barred HM back!

J. Wino

Hey J,

You're right, and I'm the guy to complain to! Here's the deal— while most other publishers' sales are down, we're doing okay thanks to folks like you that keep buying. Based on other letters and retailers response, more sex equals less sales, less sales means Heavy Metal goes out of business and if that happens nobody will have anything to complain about. Keep coming back, I'll do what I can.

Dear H.M.,

I think it's just silly silly that you guys censor your magazine. I think you do this so you can sell to younger adults, but EVERY single store that I know that sells HM keeps them in the porno section and won't let people under 18 years old purchase them. Silly people, bubbles are for blowing, not for hiding. Keep the art in tact.

Dave

Hey Dave,

Couldn't agree more—I've seen HM in music sections, comics, games, animation, entertainment and porn. Due to moral issues in this country, some places cannot put the magazine in reach of people under 18.

Keep walking that stress filled fine line with us, and I'll do what I can to please everyone.

Dear H.M.,

All I can say is that you've messed up big time!! I've been waiting for the hyper CD for ages and now I find I have to go online to use it. It's slow and badly laid out. I am disappointed with you. Heavy Metal used to mean quality- a magazine for adults, not commercial zombies. You could have paid for a decent CD with the sponsorship alone. Instead you have chosen to shamelessly exploit your readers and take them for idiots. The product that I have received is not as per solicited in Previews! I have a good mind to report you for false advertising!!

James

Hey James.

Everyone who worked on the CD tried to make it as cool as possible. We thought we won some battles and lost others. Thanks for your honesty. We'll try harder in the future.

Dear H.M.,

I just purchased your magazine hoping to find the Ritual demo on the CD as promised on the cover of the Summer 2000 issue. After searching for hours and watching Julie Strain wave her...hair in my face... I gave up. There is no game on the disk, is there?!

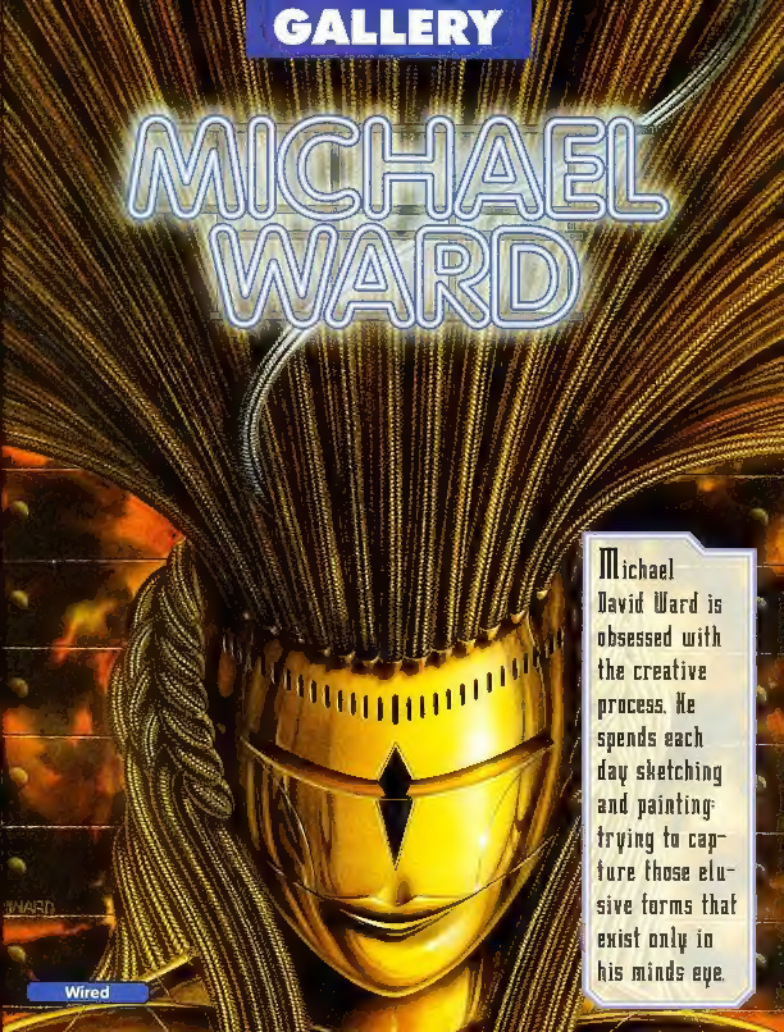
Juan

Hey Juan,

It seems demo means different things to different people - - The three minute demonstration on the CD that showed the game in "movie trailer style" is different from folks playing a level of the game as a "demo". We thought we delivered a "demo" and are sorry you were disappointed. We'll chose our words more carefully the next time.

SEND LETTERS TO HEAVY METAL, 100 MERCHANT DR.,

MICHAEL WARD



Michael David Ward is obsessed with the creative process. He spends each day sketching and painting, trying to capture those elusive forms that exist only in his minds eye.

Ward has been exploring art since an early age and after pursuing a career in the high tech industry as a technical writer and illustrator, he finally made a full time commitment to freelancing and fine arts in 1987. During that time, while he sold many of his paintings in galleries across the country and internationally, Ward also started an action sportswear company called Lifeforms, which featured his character designs.

Automaton

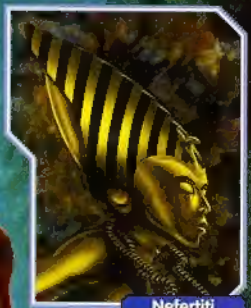
After a number of years, the company became very successful, selling its clothing to stores all over the world. Ward finally sold his interest in the company to pursue more freely many of the ideas that personally excited him.

Rising

Siren

The Oracle

Medusa



Nefertiti

Even Hollywood became interested in some of the character and story ideas that Ward created for his company which resulted in options by two major studios.

In between his own personal painting, Ward has created numerous commemorative works for Paramount Studios Star Trek, Lucas Art's Star Wars, and New Line Cinemas' Lost in Space. Many of the images he created have been licensed by companies and produced on products such as collector plates, prints, puzzles, calendars, trading cards, etc.

Mia

Planet Robot

Ward spends most of his time on his personal works where he can be completely free to pursue anything that comes to mind. Presently he is developing several science-fiction story projects, combining both his writing and paintings. Ward is excited at the prospect of exploring his characters through writing. He feels with story-telling, the characters can come to life.

Ward finds the imagination limitless in its ability to conjure up the fantastic and sees no end in sight for all the ideas that will provide him a lifetime's worth of visions to paint and write about.

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THE ULTIMATE DESTINATION FOR HORROR SCI-FI FANTASY & CULT

The Classic Artistry of Gary Gianni

In a fantasy art world dominated by slick airbrushed effects and computer-generated images, Gary Gianni is something of a rarity: an old-fashioned craftsman whose beautifully rendered paintings and illustrations are clearly done by hand with the time-tested materials of pen and India ink and oil paints. Gianni's style manages to evoke the classic book and magazine illustrators of the late 19th and early 20th century without seeming labored or self-consciously retro. He first gained the attention of discerning fantasy art fans with his stellar work on Dark Horse Comics' Doc Savage and The Shadow titles. Recently, however, Gianni contributed the color and black and white illustrations to a lavishly produced collection of Robert Howard's Solomon Kane stories. Heavy Metal caught up with this artistic wizard to discuss the Kane book, his comics work, and his current Robert Howard project. The Last Hero.

RINGGENBERG: Gary, you work in a classic style that's more reminiscent of illustrators such as N.C. Wyeth and Joseph Clement Coll than more contemporary influences. Can you tell us a little about your art training and influences.

GIANNI: My influences are varied, and I don't restrict myself to any particular time. There are plenty of contemporary artists working that I like, it's just that I have a connection with certain artists, and I feel that painters such as N.C. Wyeth and Frederic Remington and Dean Cornwell strike a cord in me, and make me want to produce work of a quality that I suppose one could say has a traditional feeling to it. I'm happy where I find myself, as far as illustrating goes, because people come to me for a certain heroic romanticism in illustration and that's the sort of thing I've been driving toward all along.

As far as my training goes, my strongest area of schooling was in figure drawing. I had four years of figure drawing. And I had some classical instructors who taught those classes, so in a sense I was being urged to look at the work of Daner and Rembrandt and 19th Century artists such as Gustave Dore as opposed to the work of contemporary fantasy illustrators like, well, like Frazetta for that matter.

R: When you're drawing Solomon Kane or Doc Savage, do you work from photographs or perhaps a live model costumed appropriately?

G: No, that's a little cost-prohibitive. I generally shoot photo reference, but I try not to rely too heavily on that. If the illustration comes out and I think, well, a photo would have been equally effective, then I've failed as a painter and an illustrator to provide anything above and beyond what a camera could have done.

R: Would you say you're more comfortable depicting past eras rather than the present or the future?

G: I'm comfortable with it because that's what I've done up until now. Most of my work has been either historical, or there have been a few contemporary settings, but I haven't done much science fiction work, at least stuff set in the future. I'm comfortable with those eras because I've built up references and it's all a matter of research. I wouldn't be opposed to working on a science fiction thing, but nothing like that's ever come up.

R: The limited edition Solomon Kane book you did was quite well received. How did you get that assignment?

G: An English publishing company contacted me. They originally had in mind doing a book similar to The Sowers of the Thunder, which was a Howard anthology of stories illustrated by Roy Krenkel. And they thought my doing a couple of hundred pen line drawings to decorate the text would be something that would be a throwback to when books were lavishly illustrated and produced. And it grew from there. Originally there weren't going to be any color plates. I pointed out the Scribner's classics that Wyeth had done, and when they had seen those things, they decided to start putting in color plates.

R: The Solomon Kane book eventually wound up being a really lavish project. What are some of the deluxe features?

G: Well, it's slip-cased, and it's a limited edition of a thousand fifty. They're all signed and numbered. They come with an extra set of plates within the slipcase, there's a dust jacket. There's gilding on the edge of the book. It also comes with a CD of an English actor from the Royal Shakespeare Company reading the poems of Robert E. Howard. I really thought that was gilding lily at the time when they said they were going to do that. But since I heard the recording, I thought they ought to put all of Howard's stuff out as books on tape, because it really sounds great when it's read. One friend had mentioned that there's so much stuff inside of this book when you open the slipcase it all falls out. It's like opening a Swiss Army knife.

R: What was your first professional work, Gary?

G: My first professional work was a newspaper magazine illustration, which an editor wanted to look like a comic strip. And I think I was about eighteen or nineteen years old. I was still in school. It was for the Chicago Sun-Times.

R: You've done quite a bit of work for Dark Horse. How did you start working for them?

G: I was working on one of the Classics Illustrated versions of Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea and (First Comics) folded and I was stuck with a 48-page comic. I went to art school with Geoff Darrow, (and he) suggested that I take it over to Dark Horse. He thought they'd print it, and that's how I established that relationship.

R: Prior to Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, you also did a collection of O. Henry short stories.

G: Yeah, that was for First. That's how I got into comics, actually. I always wanted to do comics, and for one reason or another, it didn't work out. It wasn't until those Classics Illustrated came along and they were being published and produced here in

Chicago, that I was able to make any kind of inroad into comics. They thought that my look fit the O. Henry stories so they gave me those as my first assignment.

R: Let's discuss your current project for Wandering Star.

G: I've been working on a second book, a companion book to the Solomon Kane stories and it's called The Last King. These are the tales of Bran Mak Morn, the last king of the Picts. Howard wrote some great material here. Both the Solomon Kane stories and the Bran Mak Morn stories are equal (to), if not better than his other character, Conan. The stories of Bran Mak Morn are equally adventurous and exciting but I think they're a little more profound inasmuch as they have a sense of pathos. Howard is very sympathetic with the plight of this oppressed tribe, the Picts, and their fatalistic movement to extinction. They're very moving, and at times, poignant stories, and those are qualities you don't generally associate with Howard. He even wrote a letter to H.P. Lovecraft where he was trying to describe his empathy with the Pictish stories. He was a student of history, and he found their struggle against authority and the advancing encroachment of Rome, a very stirring one, worthy of epic proportions. I don't know if he ever made this connection, but I see one. He was a writer in Texas in the 30's and I just see a great analogy or a metaphor there for the plight of the Native American Indians and the battle against the encroaching races coming into the country at that time. That's how I see the Picts and their struggle to survive, a doomed one at that.

R: I think from reading some of Howard's other writings that he was very conscious of the struggle between different races for survival.

G: Well, it's the story of mankind, isn't it? It's certainly a political struggle today, and it may be that it's always been that way. Race is disguised with the categories, the labels of race or religion, but it's the eternal struggle that's been going on since the dawn of man, and you see it all over the world today. So, it's nothing new there, but it certainly makes a grand adventure story. He routs these stories in a historical framework, and then he adds these fantastic elements to them, and it makes them so much more than just some sort of fantasy that has no bearing to anything rooted in reality. He does a great job of setting the stage with the Picts in the Second Century, and with Kane for that matter, in the middle of the Fifteenth Century. And then goes on to add flying harpies or monsters coming up out of the Earth. Conan is an out-and-out fantasy, and as grand as that is, there is a little more of a challenge of trying to marry fantasy with the historical settings, and to try and keep the reader with one foot on the ground. It's a big responsibility, too, as an illustrator, not to disrupt the fragile relationship between a reader and an author. By that I mean you can crystallize imagery to the point where it might be well beyond what the author even intended. For example, in describing a monster or some kind of supernatural setting, many times Howard will refer to things or imbue you with a feeling rather than come out and describe it in clear and crystal terms. Especially in the Bran Mak Morn stories, mood is first and foremost. The order of the day. More so than any illustrative passage. I think, is the melancholy feeling and the underlying feeling of doom and oppression that as an illustrator it isn't as easy to put a face into a visual without damaging the fragile tone that the author set up. Howard supplies all the action. I don't need to keep painting the same scenes he's doing such a beautiful job illustrating with words over again.

R: The Bran Mak Morn book is another major commission for you. How many pieces are you actually executing for it?

G: There are 40 inked line illustrations and 15 oil paintings, as opposed to Kane (which) had 200 inked line drawings and seven oil paintings. But I think they are nice companion books. I think everyone should run out and buy both of them.

R: When will the Bran book be out?

G: Probably the beginning of next year, 2001.

R: Are you planning to do more work for Wandering Star?

G: We're talking about it. It's a bit in the future. Their idea is to present some of the other things that Robert E. Howard has written and try to take them off the paperback rack and elevate them to a place of a little more permanence. The literary quality of the work deserves more than some of the third-rate production values that Howard's received with the books in the past. Great covers on a lot of this stuff but just not much in the way of fine paper. (Wandering Star is) raising the bar with their production values on these books.

R: When we spoke earlier, you mentioned that you might do another comics project in the future.

G: Yeah, I'd like to do more of this "Monstermen" series, which is a comic strip I write and draw and occasionally Dark Horse publishes it. It's been rather intermittent in recent years due to these book projects, but I have another Monstermen story in the back of my head that I'd like to do. And Dark Horse might be putting out a collection of the Monstermen stories.

R: What's the premise of the Monstermen?

G: It's a fairly broad premise, but it's basically about a paranormal investigator and he's 500 years old, trying to keep the shadowy creatures of the underworld firmly underfoot but they keep managing to tear their ugly heads up. And I rely quite heavily on a lot of 19th century and early 20th century ghost stories and pulp materials. So it's got kind of a noir, pulp look to it. It's hard to explain. You'll just have to pick it up and read it.

The Galactic Geographic Society's Worlds of Wonder Series

The Pinnacles of Epsilon Prime

There are many classes of stars, ranking from tiny but massive white dwarfs to gaseous giant stars. With the right conditions, all of them can harbor planetary systems. Epsilon Prime, a red giant star hundreds of times larger than Earth's parent star Sol, has long been known to have planets. But because of the star's volatile nature, no one expected to find life on any of them.

While it is true that no indigenous life exists there, Epsilon Prime 2 is home to an unusual mining colony operated by the Noron, the only aquatic member of the Galactic Federation of Worlds.

The painting on the facing page shows the center for their water-filled colony being visited by the Galactic Geographic's flagship cruiser *Discovery*. The colony was established to mine water to support aquatic bases in the nearby Tao group.

According to the Noron, their interest in the planet was at first simple curiosity. They wondered why most of the scorched and blasted planet is bristling with pinnacles like those shown in the painting by Geographic artist and explorer Karl Kofoed, who was aboard the Discovery when it chanced upon the Noron colony during a routine survey mission.

"It was quite unique to have to don diving gear to visit a Federation colony," writes Kofoed. "But, it seems only fair. After all, they must wear aquatic containment suits to visit us. What is seen of the colony in this image is only the surface: access ports, gas vents, and heat exchange processors of the much larger colony that lies deep underground."

Carved from solid basalt, the colony is protected when periodic blasts of solar wind ravage the planet as they have for millions of years. Such outgassing of super-heated plasma from the giant star are believed to be the cause of the odd formations that are found everywhere on the planet's surface. The outcroppings, many of which tower a kilometer or more, are thought to have been caused by a unique erosive process called geo-sublimation, the gradual gasification of the rocky surface over time.

At one time there was much more mass to the planet. But gradually, as the planet's elliptical orbit took it nearer to the star, its barren surface was scorched away leaving vertical chimneys of crystallized magma from ancient volcanoes.

The Noron contend that as long as rock can be found that bears water, the colony will be active.

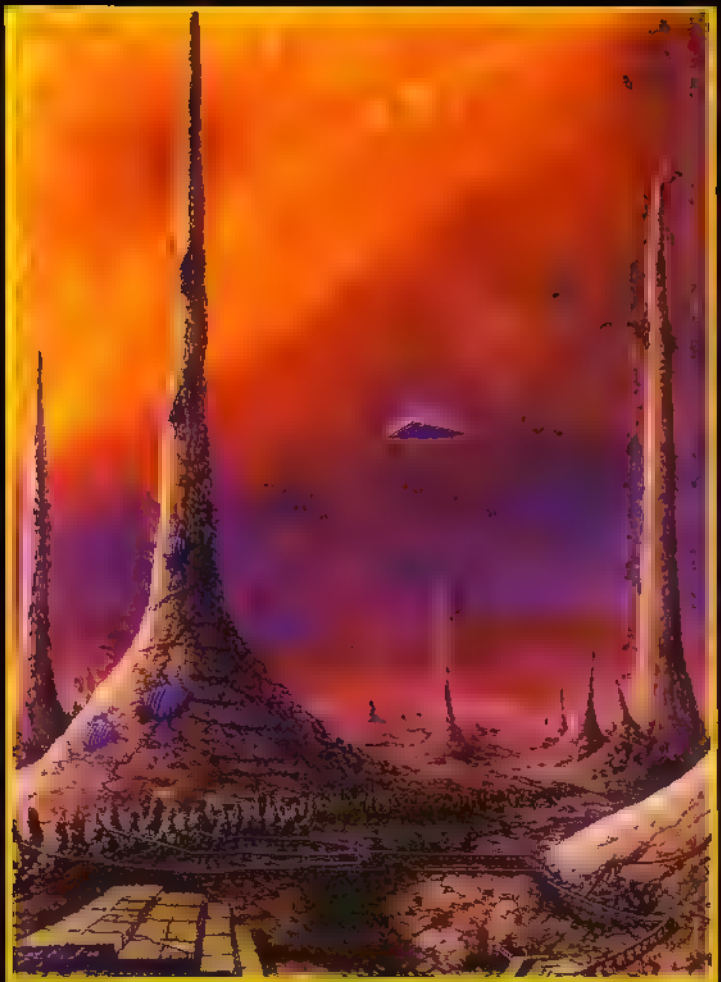
Why the planet's rock contains large amounts of water is a mystery. But it has been a boon to the Noron, who discovered the water accidentally while surveying the planet to determine the cause of the curious formations.

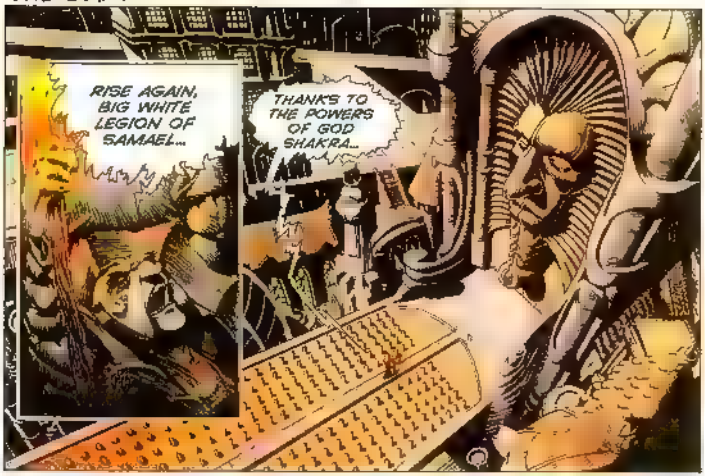
"We were as astonished to find the Noron water colony on Epsilon 2 as we were by the strange rock formations," says Kofoed. "But we understand their presence there. Water is perhaps more precious to the Noron than it is to the Humans or Tsaileroh. It is an essential part of everything they do. And water worlds are rare, especially in this quadrant."

After the discovery of this colony in 3065 a trade agreement was formed with the Noron to supply water and other by-products of their mining operations to nearby Federation member colonies.

Today Epsilon Prime 2, despite its close proximity to its red-giant parent star, has become a principal port of call for merchants and tourists from many worlds. Asked why he would recommend the planet as a tourist stop, Kofoed says: "The Noron water colony is a fascinating place to visit. And the sunrises and sunsets on EP2 are simply amazing!" ▲

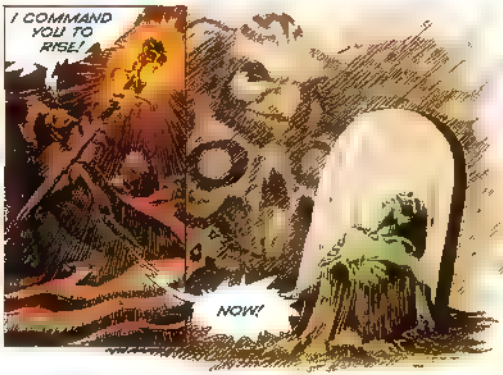
Galactic Geographic ©2000 Karl Kofoed





Story and Art by
Roberto Ricci

The Dart



I'M SORRY, BUT THIS TIME YOU AND YOUR ARMY WILL BE MEMBERS OF THE EVIL
I AM YOUR NEW MASTER
FOLLOW ME!
SAMAEL, DEFENDER OF THE OPPRESSED!

THERE ARE DAYS WE WALK WITHOUT STOPPING.
I DON'T FEEL WEARINESS NOR PAIN.
THE NECROMANCER GIVES US ORDERS
THE STONE FORCES US TO CARRY THEM OUT
THE CITY IS NEAR, HURRY UP!
SOMETIMES SPLINTERS OF MY PAST LIFE COME BACK TO REMIND ME OF WHO I WAS.
SAMAEL, THE GREAT LEADER!
BUT THEN I RETURN TO REALITY.

ALL MY LIFE I ALWAYS FOUGHT AGAINST THE EVIL...
THEY'VE ARRIVED AT THE OUTSIDE WALLS
PREPARE TO DEFEND!
...BUT NOW I AM PART OF IT
YOUR MASTER COMMANDS YOU TO KILL!

THERE IS AN OUT BREAK OF SLAUGHTER
THE INFLUENCE OF THE STONE COMPLETELY PERMEATES US,
FORCING US TO KILL INNOCENT MEN
WOMEN!
CHILDREN!!
AND I
I'M CRYING

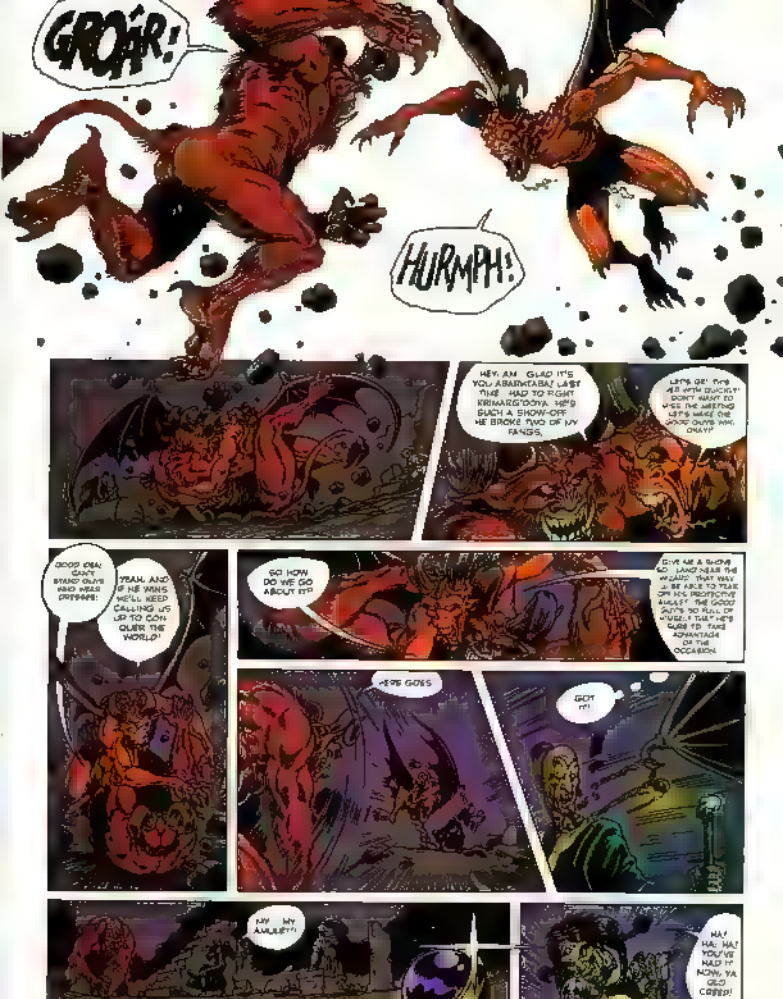
BLOOD AND SOULS TO SHAKRA!
THE LIGHT IS TOO NEAR
SLOW EVERYTHING WILL FAIL
SZOCKFSSSSS!!
WHAT?!
SSSSSSSS!!!
THE STAFF!
BUT THAT DART GIVES ME A CHANCE
FOK

I PICK UP THE STAFF
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
MY MIND GETS IN TOUCH WITH THE MINDS OF THE OTHER MEN...
...AND THANKS TO THE STONE I CAN ORDER THEM TO DO WHAT I WANT AND THEY CAN'T REFUSE
KILL THE NECROMANCER!
GET AWAY!
YOU...
YOU CAN'T...
WHILE THE CITIZENS ARE ASTONISHED AND HORRIFIED BY WHAT THEY SEE...
I UNDERSTAND THAT THIS WORLD DOESN'T BELONG TO US ANYMORE

THE ONLY THING THAT KEEPS US ALIVE IS THIS STONE.
BUT I DON'T WANT THIS "LIFE"...
...NEITHER DO MY FRIENDS.
MY BODY IS PULVERIZING.
THE WIND BLOWS IT AWAY.
AND FINALLY...
...THE PEACE.

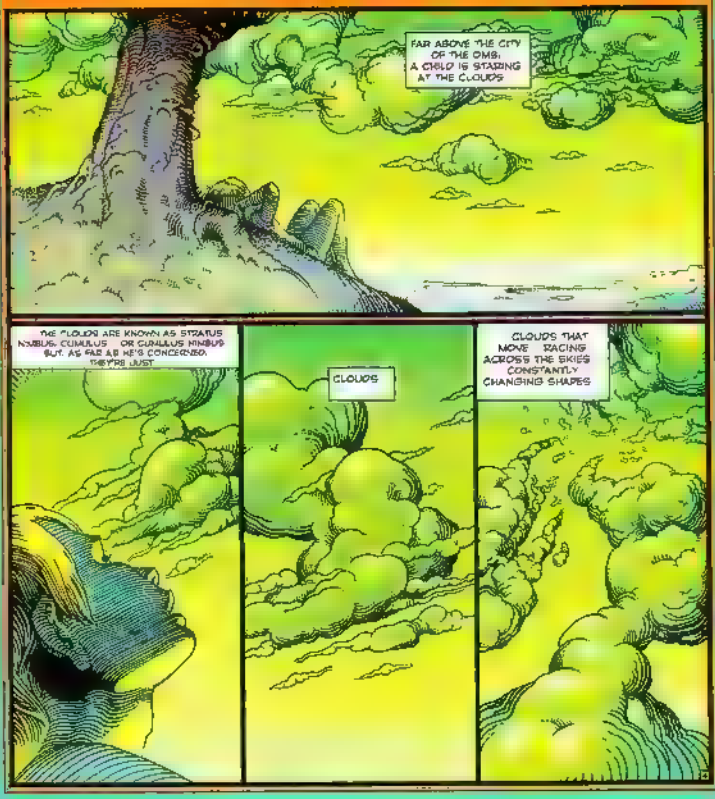
WHAT DO YOU EXPECT IF YOU INVOKE DEMONS?

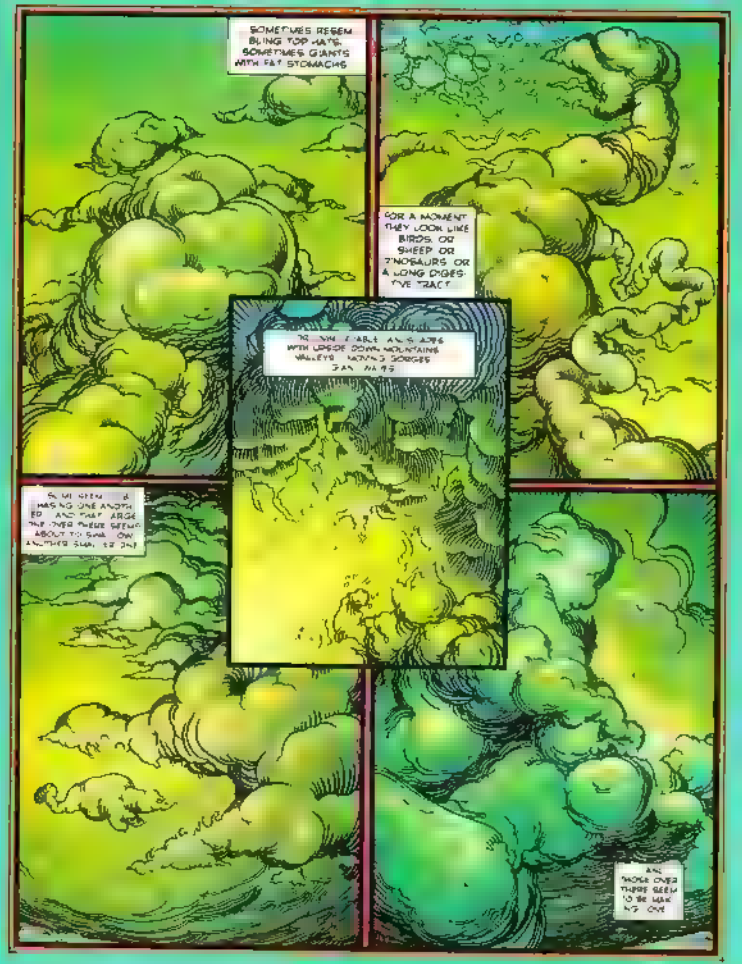
BY BEELZEBUB AND BELIAL! I INVOKE YOU, OH DEMON OF THE FIFTH CIRCLE!
MATERIALIZE NOW AND DESTROY MY ENEMIES
BY ASMODEUS! HE HAS MADE A DEMON OF THE FIFTH CIRCLE COME FORTH!
WOW! A DEMON OF THE FIFTH CIRCLE!
SOP!
I'M NOT FEELING SO HEROIC NOW, ARE YOU?
"I'LL TEACH YOU TO IGNORE US WOMEN, DAWN WIZARD!
I'VE FIGURED OUT HOW TO INVOKE THE FIFTH CIRCLE TOO!

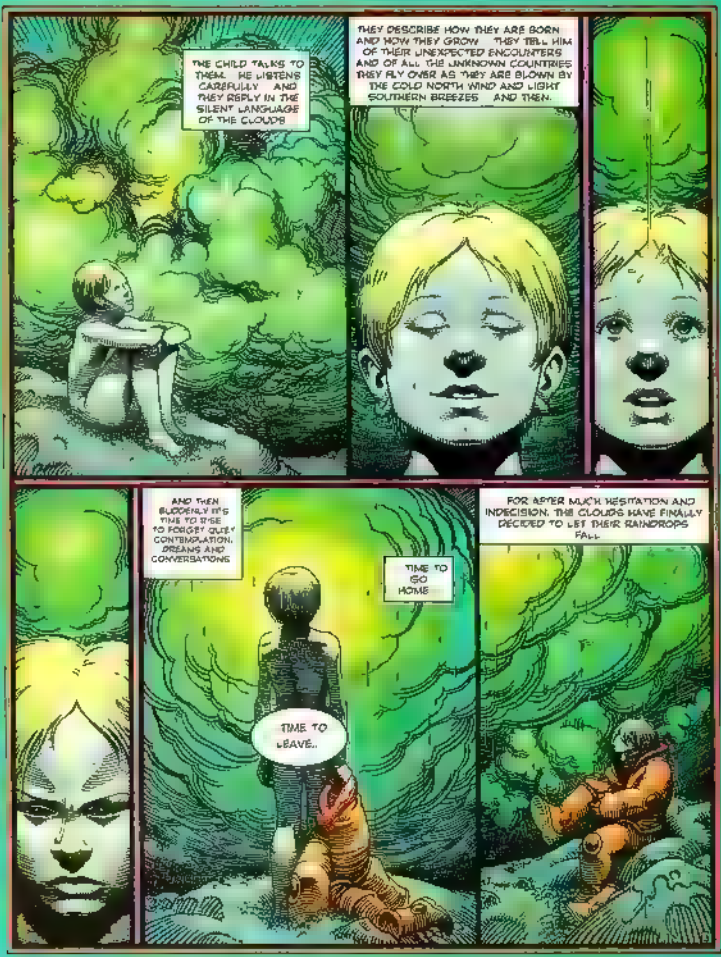

GROAR!
HURMPH!
HEY, AM GLAD IT'S YOU ABARWATABA! LAST TIME HAD TO FIGHT KRIMARGDOVA, HE'D BUCH A SHOW-OFF HE BROKE TWO OF MY FANGS.
LET'S GO! THIS AIN'T WITH QUICKLY! DON'T WANT TO MISS THE MEETING LET'S MAKE THE GOOD GUYS WIN, OKAY?
GOOD IDEA. CAN'T STAND GUYS WHO WEAR CAPES!
YEAH, AND IF HE WINS WE'LL KEEP CALLING US UP TO CON OVER THE WORLD!
SO HOW DO WE GO ABOUT IT?
GIVE ME A SECOND SO I CAN HEAR THE WIZARD. THAT WAY I'LL BE ABLE TO TAKE OFF HIS PROTECTIVE AURAS! THE GOOD GUY'S SO FULL OF HUGE-I TUDE, HE'S SURE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE OCCASION.
HERE GOES
GOT IT!
MY MY AMULET!!
HA! HA! HA! YOU'VE HAD IT NOW, YA OLD COOT!

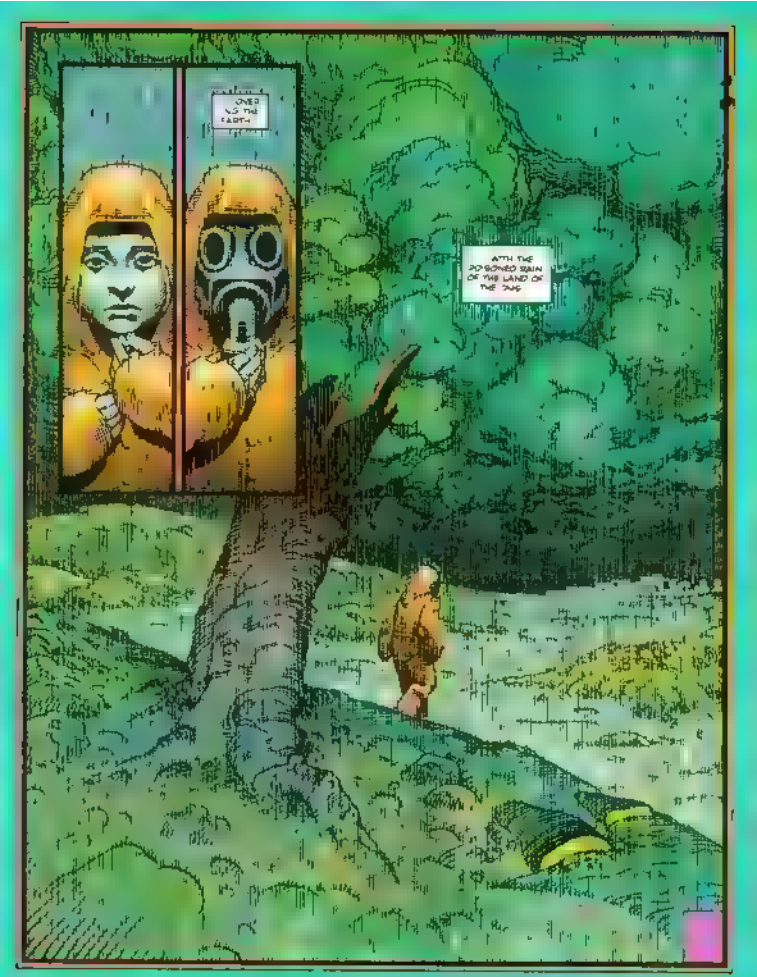
EAT TH S!
BLEEP
ZOOOOOF
THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP BISHKNAKH. I'M SENDING YOU BACK TO YOUR DIMENSION
WE TOLD HIM WE WERE IN THE FIRST PLACE, TOO!
THESE BEASTIES ARE DAMNED EFFICIENT
I TELL YOU, BROTHERS, WE HAVE TO PUT A STOP TO THIS. THOSE STUPID HUMANS INVOKE US FOR THE TINIEST LITTLE
THING ENOUGH IS ENOUGH! OUR LIVES HAVE BECOME INFERNAL!
WE MUST HAND UP A LIST OF DEMANDS. A SHORTER WORKING WEEK. MORE VACATIONS. A LARGER WORK FORCE. RETIREMENT AT THE AGE OF 550!!
UNITED WE CAN OBTAIN ALL OUR
ZOOOOF!
DEEP! INVOKED AGAIN!
IT'S NOT OVER.
I NEVER CHANGES
WE JUST HAVE TO WAIT FOR HIM TO GET BACK!
@#%@ SATANIC HUMANS!
WHEN WILL I S*OP?!

CLOUDS


FAR ABOVE THE CITY OF THE OMB, A CHILD IS STARING AT THE CLOUDS
THE CLOUDS ARE KNOWN AS STRATUS NIMBUS CUMULUS OR CUMULUS NIMBUS BUT, AS FAR AS HE'S CONCERNED, THEY'RE JUST
CLOUDS
CLOUDS THAT MOVE RACING ACROSS THE SKIES CONSTANTLY CHANGING SHAPES


SOMETIMES REGEM BLING TOP HATS, SOMETIMES GIANTS WITH FAT STOMACHS
FOR A MOMENT THEY LOOK LIKE BIRDS, OR SHEEP OR DINOSAURS OR A LONG DIGESTIVE TRACT
AH, THERE THEY SEEM TO BE MAKING NO SOUND


THE CHILD TALKS TO THEM. HE LISTENS CAREFULLY AND THEY REPLY IN THE SILENT LANGUAGE OF THE CLOUDS
THEY DESCRIBE HOW THEY ARE BORN AND HOW THEY GROW. THEY TELL HIM OF THEIR UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTERS AND OF ALL THE UNKNOWN COUNTRIES THEY FLY OVER AS THEY ARE BLOWN BY THE COLD NORTH WIND AND LIGHT SOUTHERN BREEZES AND THEN.
AND THEN SUDDENLY IT'S TIME TO RISE TO FORGET QUIET CONTEMPLATION, DREAMS AND CONVERSATIONS
TIME TO GO HOME
TIME TO LEAVE..
FOR AFTER MUCH HESITATION AND INDECISION, THE CLOUDS HAVE FINALLY DECIDED TO LET THEIR RAINDROPS FALL


OVER
ALL THE
EARTH
WITH THE
POISONED RAIN
OF THE LAND OF
THE DAG

THE IRON TOWER
PSSST! BIRDIE
WHAT ARE YOU DOING FOR BREAKFAST
RAH
OH

THE EARLY BIRDDW'S WORKIN TWO IN THE BUSH

?

GREAT. JUST MAKE JOSS = AT HUNT

WHEN I GET BACK THERE'LL BE HELL TO PAY!

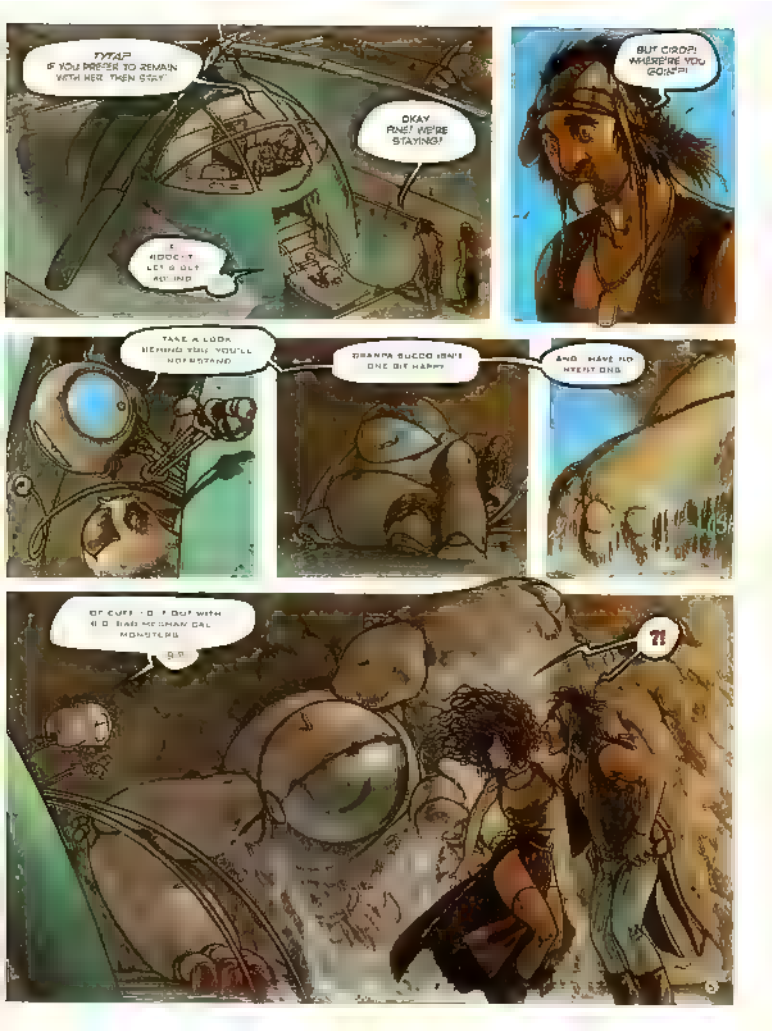
BUT RIGHT NOW, HAVE OTHER THINGS TO TAKE CARE OF

ENGINES!

Woo
THE OVEN'S ON

UP AND AWAY!
FLAP
SO, MY LITTLE MENTOR?
?!
JUST MAKING SURE THAT EVERYTHING'S SHIPSHAPE?
BUT I
SO, WHERE WERE YOU OFF TO?
HEY, STOPPIT! YOU'RE HURTING ME
OH, I'M HURTING YOU, AM I? GET OUTTA MY SIGHT, YOU SNIVELLY TURD!
AND MAY THEY FEED YOUR EYES TO THE VULTURES.

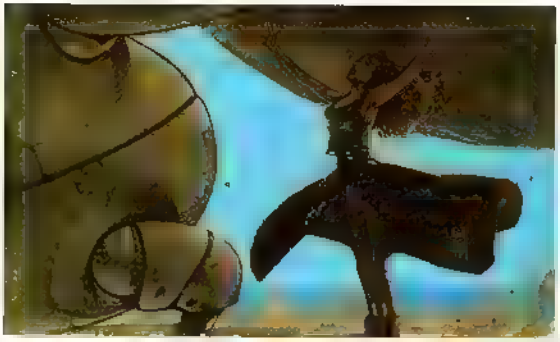
I'VE BEEN READING TZYAN SAYA'S DIARY
YOU SENT ERWA'S FATHER TO HIS DEATH!
GET LOST!
YOU'RE STINKIN' THIS PLACE UP!
WHEN I'M DONE HERE I'LL COME AND FIX YOUR SCRAWNY LITTLE BUTT!
SCUMBAG.
?!
"S ZER."
WHAT THE HELL'S HE UP TO NOW?
SUCCO TURNED OUT TO BE A REAL RAT! WE'D HAVE BEEN STUCK IN THIS BUNG HOLE
I SURPRISED HIM WHILE HE WAS TRYING TO "BORROW" ME MOJO.
SUSSS HE WANTED TO GO TO THE TOWER BEFORE US
THE OLD FOOL. HE THOUGHT HE COULD JUMP THE GUN. GET READY FOR TAKEOFF!
FANGO MOVE IT!
MOVE WHAT?! YOU'RE EVEN NUTTIER THAN THAT FRUITCAKE SUCCO!!
WHAT ABOUT TYTA?! YOU WANT ME TO LEAVE HER HERE AND GO WITH YOU?


TYTAF! IF YOU PREFER TO REMAIN WITH HER, THEN STAY!
OKAY FINE! WE'RE STAYING!
I ADOPT. LET'S GET ACTING.
BUT CROP! WHERE'RE YOU GOING?!
TAKE A LOOK BEHIND YOU. YOU'LL NOT STAND
GRANPA SUCCO ISN'T ONE OF THEM
AND HAVE NO MYSTICISM.
OF COURSE - I DON'T DEAL WITH BIG MERMAN CAL MONSTERS
?!

HOLY YOK SHIT!
ERHA! SLAM YOUR FOOT DOWN!

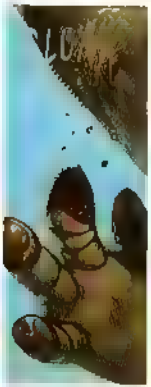
W- WE CHANGED OUR MINDS
SOUP'S ON
THAT'S IT! WE'RE TAKING OFF
NOT YET YOU'RE NOT!
CRUNK
HEY! WHAT'S GOIN' ON?
WE'RE STUCK!

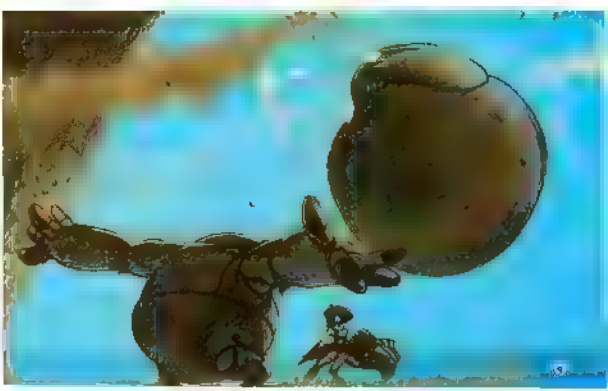
TYTA!? YOU'RE CRAZY! WHERE'RE YOU GOING?
NOW WHAT'S SHE UP TO?
TYTA!!!
NON! TYTA! COME BACK!



TYTA?!

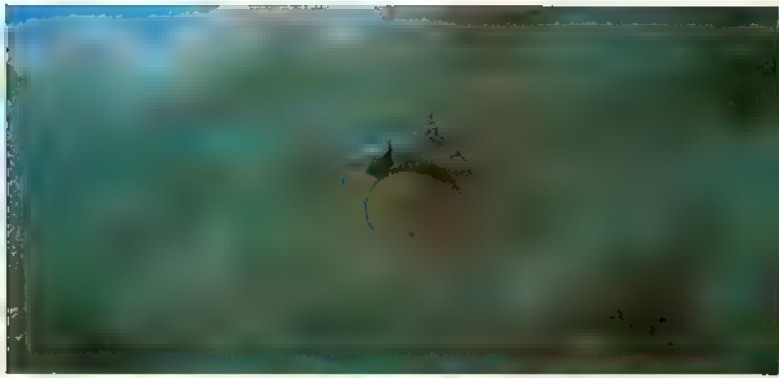
WHY?





PHEW!
WE MADE IT!
MADE IT?
SGRRRRR!!!
WE GOTTA GO BACK! GIMME THOSE CONTROLS!
CHRONK
ZERA!?!
S OKAY. HE'S COOLED OFF!

BUT
WHY?
DO YOU REALIZE EXACTLY WHAT YOU'VE DONE?
I WAS HIS MASTER!
I'M THE ONE THAT SHOULD HAVE DONE
FANG!



BURP!

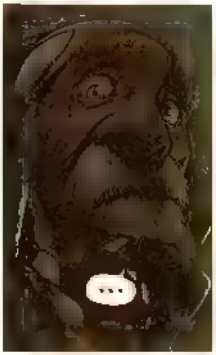
HEGE BOYD MAN ... OU
VEALLY DREAT LO 4PANT
O4 A LONG KOTALE
WOULDN'T YOU DAY

...POW?
I DONS FIGURE
OUT ALL THAT STUFF
WITH SUCCO!

WHEN I READ YOUR MOTHER'S DIARY I UNDERSTOOD EVERYTHING

SHE HAD BEEN VERY SICK WHEN SUCCO ARRIVED ON THE ISLAND

SO HE PASSED HIMSELF OFF AS A DOCTOR AND SENT YOUR FATHER TO THE MASER VILLAGE UNDER THE FALSE PRETEXT OF BRINGING BACK THE MEDICINE TO SAVE YOUR MOTHER'S LIFE
IN TRUTH, HIS SOLE PURPOSE IN DOING SO WAS TO MAKE HIS POSITION KNOWN TO THE MASER VILLAGE SO HE COULD GET THE HELP HE NEEDED TO CONTINUE ON HIS QUEST
SUCCO CRAVED THE POWER HE WOULD ACQUIRE BY BEING THE FIRST TO REACH THE TOWER SO HE HAD NO QUALMS IN
SENDING YOUR FATHER TO CERTAIN DEATH. THE CONSEQUENCES WERE DISASTROUS. AND

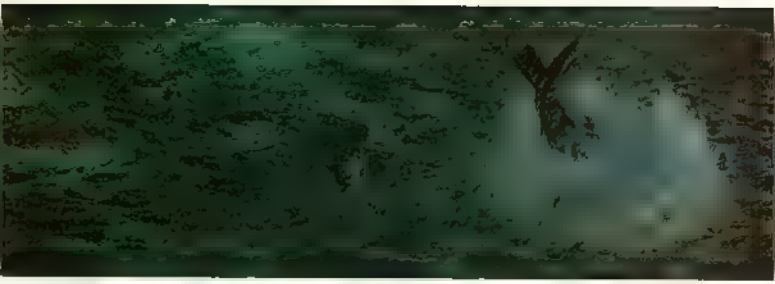

...

NOW, REST A WHILE I'LL TAKE OVER

AS I UNDERSTAND YOUR MOTHER CAME FROM THE TOWER?
YES
THAT'S WHAT I READ
SOMEWHERE IN HER DIARY
YOUR MOTHER WROTE
"When the sacred core disappears, The break in the ring
will be mended and immaculate light will burst forth."
WHAT COULD SHE HAVE MEANT BY THAT?

YOUR MOTHER KNEW MANY THINGS ABOUT THE TOWER
MUCH MORE THAN US, THE SO-CALLED KEEPERS
HYAP
LOO! WHO'S BACK FROM THE LAND OF NOD
?
TURN THIS THING AROUND!
OH GREAT HERE WE GO AGAIN!

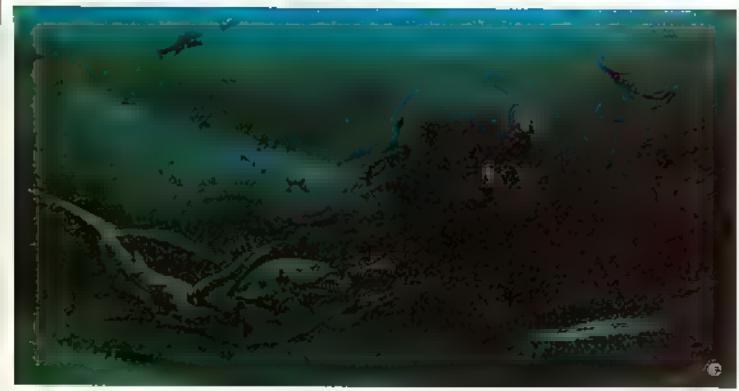
NO! SO MAKE ME!
I SAID TURN AROUND! DINCHA HEAR ME, OLE FART?
BE QUIET!
THE YOKS
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
I HEAR THEM CRYING. THEY'RE IN PAIN!
YOU GOTTA BE KIDDING ME!
WOT DO YOU HEAR 'EM?

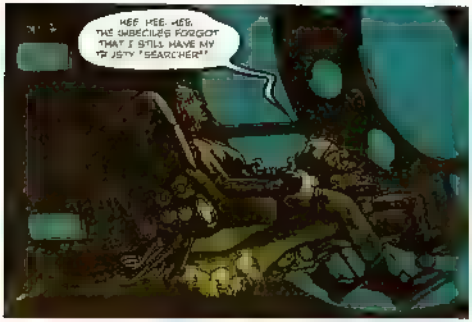


D'YA SEE THAT?!

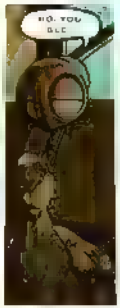
THEY'RE HURT!

YOU OKAY, ERIN?




HEE HEE. HEE. THE IMBECILES FORGOT THAT I STILL HAVE MY TRUSTY "SEARCHER"

THE STORM HAS PASSED. THE YORD AREN'T BRYING ANYMORE


NO. YOU DIE

OLD MORNY HAS DECIDED.

TO PUT THE MARK ON THE OTHER'S BACK!

?
?
?

THE TOWER!

OH-OH! LOOKS LIKE A WELCOMING COMMITTEE IS WAITING FOR US ON TOP OF THE MIN TOWER
DAMN!
BY EMILY, NO WITH NO CAL BULLETS!
BUT WHAT HAVE I DONE?
WHHHHY DOES EVERRRYYONE HATE ME SO?
AIM FOR THE PROPELLER!
I AM AIMING FOR THE PROPELLER!
OUR ENGINE'S BEEN HIT!
SHUT YER FACE AND LOOK!
THAT'S PATHETIC
SO WHAT ELSE IS NEW?
WHAZZAT?! I THOUGHT I SAW A DWARF FALL INTO THE WATER.
WHERE

YOU GUYS ARE GETTING REALLY GOOD AT GETTING THE HELL BLOWN OUT OF US
01
03

THE MOTOR! IT'S ABOUT TO EXPLODE!
ERMA TAKE OVER THE CONTROLS

I'LL DUMP THE MOTOR!

TRY TO LAND IN THE VICINITY OF THAT BIG CRACK IN THE WALL!

BUT...
I CAN'T LAND HERE! THOSE ARE MAROONED YOKS.
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!
HEY! WHAT'RE YOU DOING? LOOK OUT ERMA! PULL UP!
KRASH

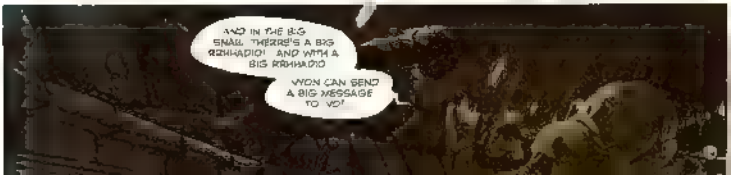
I'M TELLING YOU, I SAW THE DAMN DWARF FALL HERE!
YOU'VE BEEN ON THE CLIM AGAIN!

YOU SEE DWARFS EVERYWHERE!

IN ANY CASE, I'M GOING TO WARN THE TOWER!

HEY WAIT FOR ME!
SLOW DOWN

NOW, WHAT'VE WE GOT HERE?
OH, IT'S A BIG SNAIL


AND IN THE BIG SNAIL THERE'S A BIG RADIO! AND WITH A BIG RADIO
WON CAN SEND A BIG MESSAGE TO YO!

FASTER, FASTER! I JUST LOVE TO FEEL THE COOL BREEZE WAFTING GENTLY OVER MY PEACH-LIKE CHEEKS
AHHGERR YOURRHH MEANNESS
BRRHHEAT LADY WE'VE GOT A MESSAGE FROM AYON. WHAT SHE DID TO YOURRH MAGNYURSP RRHELEASE TO THE BRRHEEZE?
FROM AYON? FATHERS OLD AYON? SHOW ME.
CONTINUED ON PG. 101

OH!
CRRKK
NEIIGH!
CRRK
NO SON DON'T SHOOT! PLEASE DON'T SHOOT BETTY!
CALM DOWN, SON!
BETTY?
THEY CALL ME MOOSE
AND I'M CALLED SNAKE. IS THIS THING YOURS?
SHE'S A BEAR
EVEN IF SHE'S FEMALE TELL ER TO KEEP THE HELL AWAY FROM ME

BETTY AND I HAVE BEEN LIVING TOGETHER FOR A LONG TIME, MY BOY ! EARN MY LIVELIHOOD, THANKS TO HER
HOW'S THAT?
! MAKE HER FIGHT! SHE HAS FOUGHT AGAINST ALMOST EVERYTHING THAT MOVES ATTACK DOGS, PUMAS, TIGERS, BUFFALO YOU NAME T SHE'S FOUGHT IT AND SHE'S ALWAYS WON ALL HAVE TO DO IS STAND BACK AND POCKET THE BETS
A FIGHT HAS BEEN SCHEDULED AT NO CORRAL AND WE SHOULD BE GETTING A BIT OF REST SHOULDN'T WE BETTY?
SLEEP WELL, SON. GOODNIGHT BETTY!
GOODNIGHT GRANDPA
DON'T KNOW HOW YOU CAN RIDE A BEAR, GRAMPS!
EASY AS FALLING OFF A HORSE WOULD YOU LIKE TO TRY IT?
NO THANKS! WOULDN'T GET ON TOP OF A BEAR FOR ALL THE GOLD 'N THE SIERRAS!

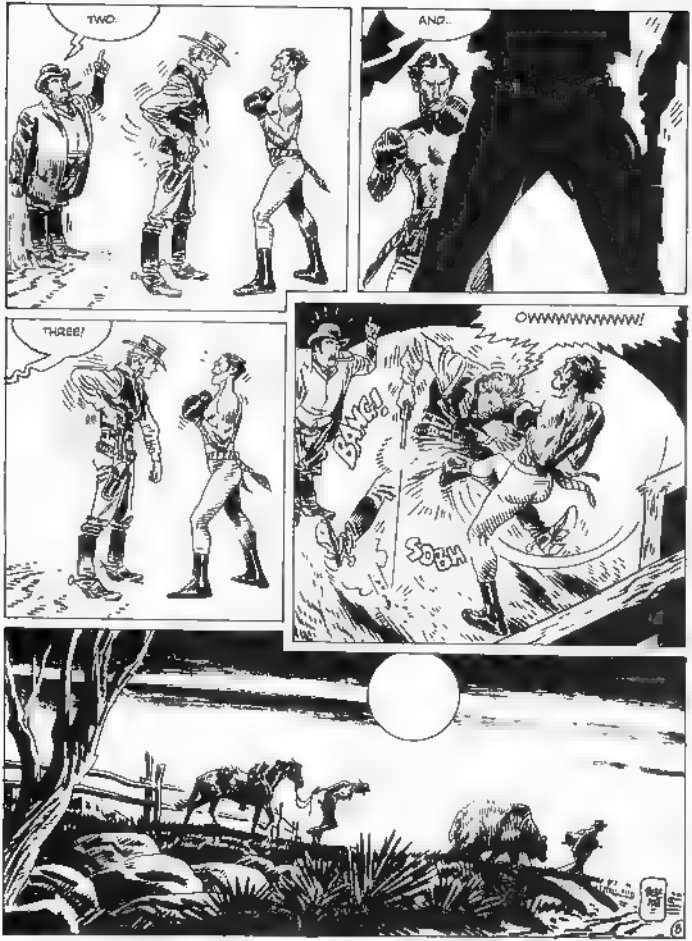
HAHAHAHA!
HE HE HE HE HE!
HOW MUCH ARE YOU GOING TO BET ON THIS FIGHT GRANDPA?
EVERYTHING I OWN, MY BOY
AND WHAT KIND OF ANIMAL IS SHE GOING TO FIGHT THIS TIME?
WELL, TO BE HONEST WITH YOU, MY BOY, I'LL BE A PRETTY SPECIAL FIGHT BETTY'S GONNA FIGHT A MAN FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER!
HE'S A TENDERFOOT FROM BACK EAST A PROFESSIONAL FIGHTER, YOU KNOW THE KIND THAT WEARS GLOVES AND ALL.. WHAT DO THEY CALL THEM GUYS ANYWAY?
A BOXER?
YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT A BOXER!
K.O. CORRAL

HUMMM!
K.O. CORRAL
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE BETS ARE NOW CLOSED AND THE FIGHTING CAN BEGIN! BUT FIRST OF ALL... AHEM LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO OUR HONORABLE ADVERSARIES!
IN THE RIGHT CORNER, THE BEAR
BETTY!
AS SAID, THE BEAR
LET'S GIVE A BIG HAND TO BETTY THE BEAR!
ON MY LEFT, SIMON SCHUSTER, THE BOXING CHAMPION FROM BOSTON! LET'S HEAR IT FOR SIMON SCHUSTER!
GET BACK, GENTLEMAN, THE FIGHT IS ABOUT TO BEGIN
BANG
4

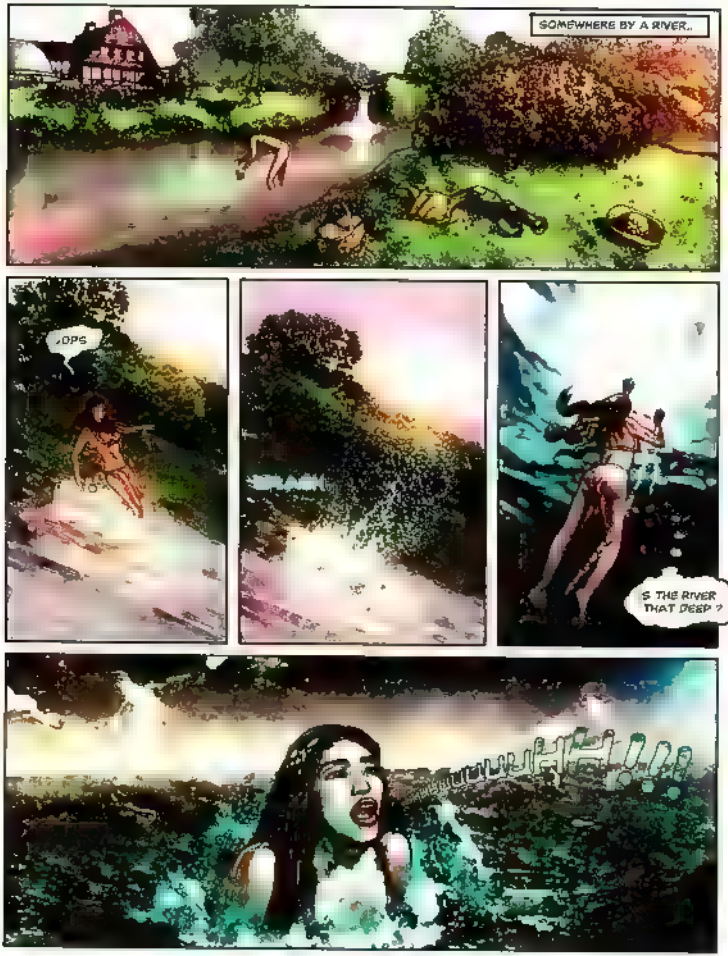
POOR GUY. MY BETTY'S GONNA WALK ALL OVER HIM.
SHOULD HOPE SO! I'VE GOT MY LAST HUNDRED BUCKS RIDING ON HER.
YOU DID WELL, SNAKE. THAT WAS A SMART MOVE!
CRRRRRRRRR
GRRRRRR!
CRACK
CRRRRRRRR

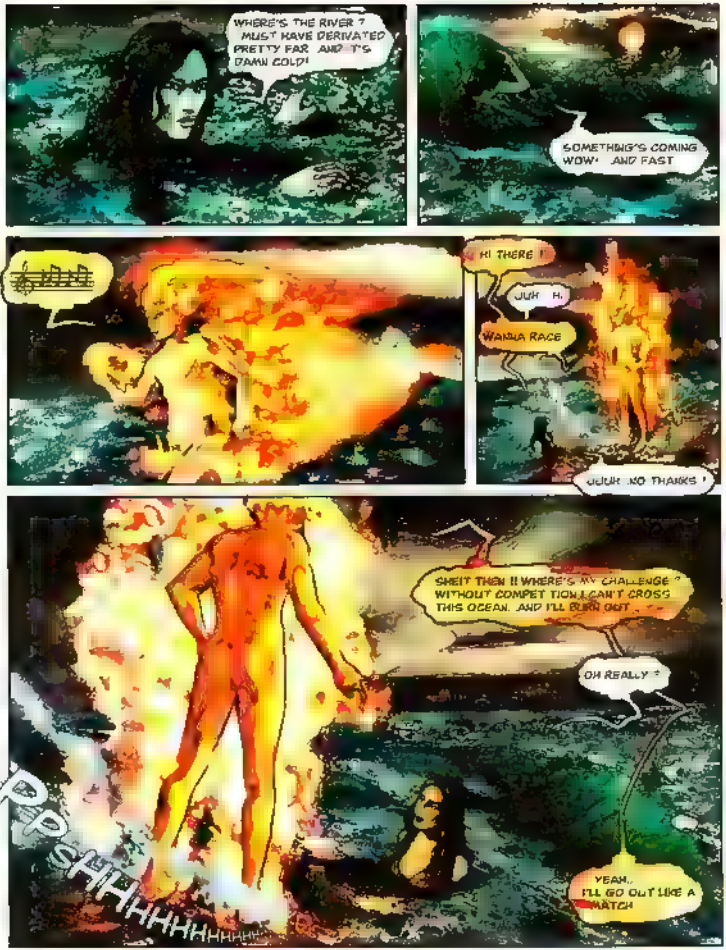
UGHRRRR!
SOB!
GRRUMPH!
CRACK!
KILL HIM, BETTY! KILL HIM!
GRRRRRRRR
CRACK
OOMPH!
CRACK
THAT'S ENOUGH! STOP IT! BETTY! MY BETTY!

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE FIGHT IS OVER! THE WINNER IS SIMON SCHUSTER! HERE'S TO OUR NEW CHAMPION!
BETTY, MY POOR LITTLE BETTY!
HIP HIP HOORAY!
CONGRATULATIONS, MR SCHUSTER! THAT WAS A MAGNIFICENT FIGHT!
THANKS, MR MASON.
YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED OF YOURSELF THE BEATING ON A POOR DEFENSELESS BEAST!
YOU THERE, FAT ASS. GIVE HIM A GUN, SO HE CAN FIGHT LIKE A MAN.
I DON'T NEED A GUN
COUNT UP TO THREE, MASON.
BUT
COUNT!
PFFF
ONE


TWO.
AND..
THREE!
OWWWWWWWW!
BANG!
SOCK!

CHALLENGE


SOMEWHERE BY A RIVER..
OOPS
IS THE RIVER THAT DEEP ?
AHHH


WHERE'S THE RIVER ? MUST HAVE DERIVATED PRETTY FAR AND IT'S DAMN COLD!
SOMETHING'S COMING WOW! AND FAST
HI THERE !
JUH H.
WANNA RACE
JUUH NO THANKS !
SHEIT THEN !! WHERE'S MY CHALLENGE ? WITHOUT COMPET TION I CAN'T CROSS THIS OCEAN. AND I'LL BURN OUT . . .
OH REALLY ?
YEAH.. I'LL GO OUT LIKE A MATCH
PPSHHHHHHHHHH

GOSH!! .. WHAT AM GONNA DO?!
WHAT AM I GONNA DO??
WHAT AM I GONNA FREAKIN DO?
WHAT AM I GONNA..
HEY RELAX, YOU'RE ACTING LIKE SWAMP FIRE I'M LOST TOO YOU KNOW
I TELL YOU WHAT
YOU FIND A CHALLENGE FOR ME UNDER THE SURFACE.
AND I'LL TAKE YOU HOME IN EXCHANGE. ? OKAY ?
WELL OKAY FIRE DUDE IT'S WORTH A TRY..
SASHA
WHY OH WHY DID I SAY YES

HEY, A BREATHER!
WHAT MEAN ?
JUST CONFUSED
UUH. HI THERE
YOU NEED TO ADAPT TO THE WATER. LOOK TO YOUR LEFT, DEAR.
WHY LOOK TO M
BUUUOOP.
NOW THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE

HEY CAN YOU EXPLAIN WHAT'S GOING ON ?
HUH ?!
WE'RE USING THE WATER TO OBSERVE MUSIC AND LIGHT AS SOLID ELEMENTS
DOES IT WORK?
WELL LOOK AROUND. IT IS HAPPENING RIGHT NOW
YOU ADAPTED EARLIER WHEN YOU FELL TO THE LEFT NOW YOU ARE ACCELERATED ENOUGH TO BE ABLE TO EXPERIENCE IT THAT WAY SIMPLY
AND HOW IS IT THAT I CAN BREATHE NORMALLY?
AND HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN ALL THE EYES ON YOUR FACE?

YOU'RE ASKING TOO MANY QUESTIONS. LET'S JUST SAY THAT YOU CAN DO ANYTHING YOU WANT WITH LIGHT.
O.K. IF YOU SAY SO YOU'RE STILL WEIRD, AND NOT THAT I'M BORED BUT I GOTTA GO YEAH... HAVE FUN WITH ALL THOSE EYES.
IT'S NOT REALLY WORKING FOR ME I CAME HERE TO LOOK FOR A CHALLENGE AND ALL I'VE FOUND IS CONFUSING OR STRANGE THINGS. HUM.
THAT'S IT. I'M GONNA BE STUCK HERE FOREVER. HOW AM I GOING TO GET OUT OF HERE ?
WAIT A MINUTE. WHAT'S COMING OUT OF THE FLOOR ?
AH AH AH I CAN'T BELIEVE IT ! A PUSH-BUTTON FROM REKO NOW I KNOW THAT M DREAMING ! I WONDER IF I'L WAKE UP PUSHING IT
PuSSSHHH IT PUSH IT ! SSSHHH.

WHUMP
WOW
NOW I'S
GETTING FUN
ARRHHH
WHY IS SHE TAKING SUCH A LONG TIME ?
WOOSH ASH
AAH SHEIT NOW MY FOOT'S ALL WET! OUCH ! OUCH !
RRRHHH! DAMN FEMALE IT'S ALL HER FAULT... I'M GONNA.....

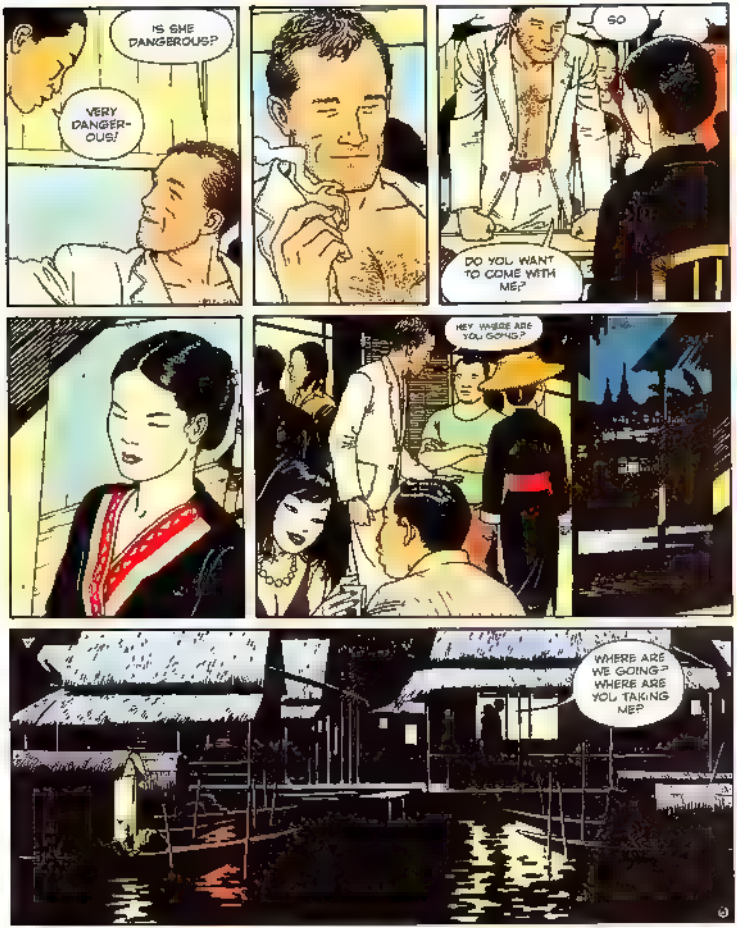
BURN
AH!
IT'S ABOUT TIME
SPLAWSH
SO YOU GOT IT ?!
WHAT ?
MY CHALLENGE
NOT REALLY
WHAT DO YOU MEAN ?
WELL I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE FIRST PLACE. WHICH MADE IT DIFFICULT PLUS ALL I'VE FOUND IS IT WAS MORE INTERESTING TO BE ON THAT QUEST THAN ACTUALLY FIND ANYTHING
IF WE APPLY THAT TO YOU, I GUESS IT MEANS THAT YOUR CHALLENGE LIES INTO TRYING TO FIND ONE YOU DON'T NEED ME FOR THAT
UH - HUH?
...AND ONCE AWARE, THE ONLY THING I COULDN'T HELP WONDERING ABOUT WAS THE DAMN BUTTON...

HOT, HUMID AND FAR AWAY
Las Palmas Club
BABY YOU CAN DRIVE MY CAR
YES I'M GONNA BE A STAR

BABY YOU CAN DRIVE MY CAR
AND MAY BE I'LL LOVE YOU
BEEP BEEP
BEEP
YEAH
LOOK WHO'S HERE!
WHO? WHERE?
GLORIA
GLORIA?!?

HI, GLORIA
GLORIA! WHEN DID YOU GET HERE?
YESTERDAY
WHERE'S MARCO?
HE DECIDED TO GO TO BANGKOK THIS YEAR
SO WHY DIDN'T YOU GO WITH HIM? IT MUST BE A WONDERFUL PLACE!
I'VE ALREADY BEEN THERE. IT'S HOT AND HUMID, AND BESIDES IT'S TOO FAR AWAY. IT'S NOT REALLY WORTH GOING THERE. BELIEVE ME.
DO YOU KNOW HER?
SHE'S MARCO TOMI'S WIFE. YOU KNOW: "TOMI STEEL AND OTHER SPECIAL ALLOYS."
WHAT A BODY! AND SHE KNOWS HOW TO MOVE IT!
SHE USED TO BE A DANCER AT THE BLACK CRAB, ON THE SOUTH COAST
TELL ME ALL, GLORIA. I'M REALLY CURIOUS.
WELL, MARCO WAS GOING THROUGH ONE OF HIS USUAL CRISES. HE WAS BORED. HE NEEDED A CHANGE. THAT'S ALL.
THAI WOMEN ARE SUPPOSED TO BE GORGEOUS. HAVEN'T YOU THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT MARCO COULD GET UP TO ON HIS OWN OVER THERE?
OH, I KNOW PERFECTLY WELL.

BANGKOK
DO YOU LIKE ME, BABY?
GET LOST!
HEY, SAN, WHO'S THAT WOMAN SITTING THERE?
I DON'T KNOW, SIR I'LL FIND OUT FOR YOU.
YOU'D BE BETTER OFF LEAVING HER ALONE! SHE'S A HMONG


IS SHE DANGEROUS?
VERY DANGER-OUS!
SO
DO YOU WANT TO COME WITH ME?
HEY, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
WHERE ARE WE GOING? WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME?

ARE WE GOING TO YOUR PLACE?
MMMH. WHAT A STRANGE PERFUME

TWO DAYS LATER
RRIING
RIING
HELLO? HELLO? BANGKOK? IT MUST BE A BAD CONNECTION! COULD YOU REPEAT THAT PLEASE?
SORRY, I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND PLEASE SPEAK UP.
BRAP
BRAP
POOT
BLIP
BLEEP
WHAT? EVERYTHING'S OKAY? GREAT! PERFECT!

ANOTHER DAY IN EAST L.A.

HOW ABOUT THIS ONE FOR A COINCIDENCE? J.J SAW ANSELMO WALKING DOWN THE STREET AND DECIDED THAT IT WAS PAYBACK TIME FOR AN OLD SCORE

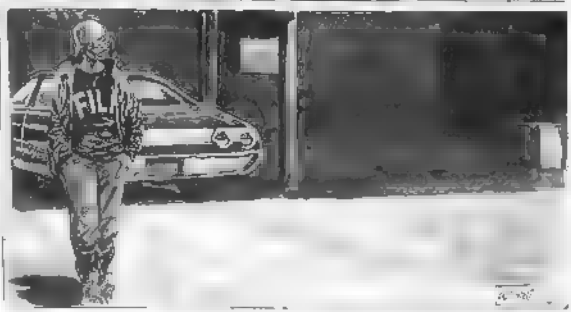
BUT ANSELMO WAS ALREADY ON HIS WAY TO SETTLE UP WITH THE KOREAN GROCER

THE KOREAN, ON THE OTHER HAND, WAS JUST MINDING HIS OWN BUSINESS RUNNING HIS GROCERY STORE DIDN'T ASK FOR NO TROUBLE, DIDN'T WANT ANY

WILLIAM WAS A COP. HE'D JUST DROPPED IN TO PICK UP A SIXPACK AND SOME PEANUTS

BY THE TIME HE GOT TO THE GROCERY STORE, ANSELMO'S STOMACH WAS GURGLING THE AFTERNOON WAS STIFLING THERE WASN'T THE SLIGHTEST BREEZE

L.J. WAS WEARING RAYBANS, NIKES, A FILA T-SHIRT AND HE HAD A SMITH AND WESSON TUCKED INTO HIS TOMMY HILFIGERS.



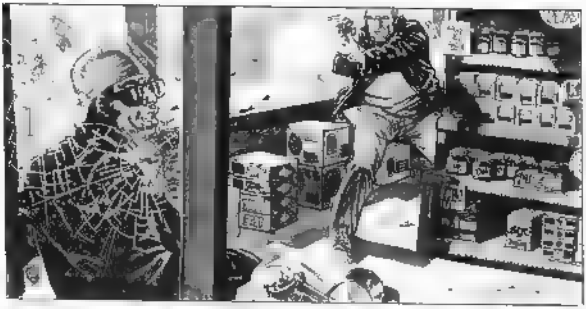
THE KOREAN WAS IN A LOUSY MOOD AS USUAL. HE'D PROBABLY HAD AN UNHAPPY CHILDHOOD
WILLIAM HAD GOT HIS COORS, AND HE WAS INSPECTING THE PEANUTS. NOTHING WAS OUT OF THE ORDINARY
ANGELMO WAS SWEATING WHEN HE WALKED INTO THE GROCERY STORE AND STARTED CASING THE PLACE AND THEN
TAKE A BASKET FOR EASY SHOPPING
FOOD PACKERS
Hood
Hood
JAPAN
HOSTESS

HE MADE THE SAME MISTAKE THAT HIS BROTHER HAD MADE BEFORE HIM. IN THE SAME KOREAN GROCERY STORE

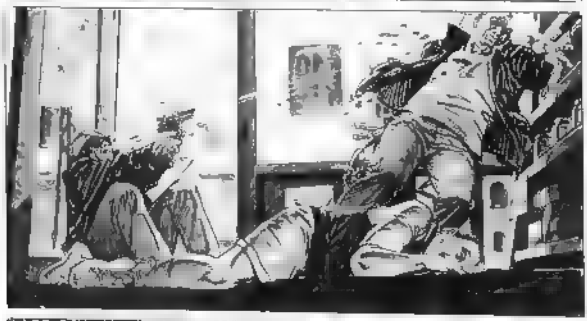
WITHOUT THINKING, J.C. WHIPPED OUT HIS SMITH AND WESSON AND PLUGGED THE KOREAN. HE DID THE JOB THAT ANSELMO HAD COME TO DO AND THAT'S HOW A GUY ENDED UP AVENGING TWO FRIENDS.

WILLIAM HAD HEARD THE GUNSHOTS BUT HADN'T SEEN WHAT HAD HAPPENED ALL HE SAW WAS AN ARMED MAN. AND DON'T FORGET HE WAS A COP, SO.

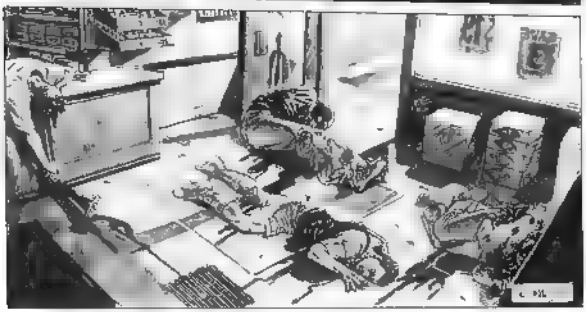
HE DID WHAT COPS DO WHEN THEY SEE A MAN WITH A GUN IN HIS HAND. HE FIRED. J.J. SLID TO THE FLOOR WITH A COUPLE OF HOLES IN HIM. WILLIAM GOT COCKY AND DIDN'T TAKE COVER. THAT WAS HIS FATAL MISTAKE



AND J.J. STILL HAD FIVE IN HIS SIX-GUN

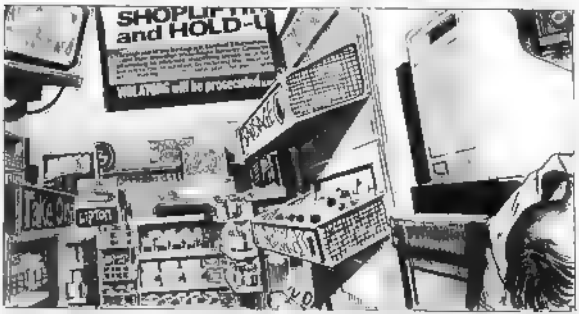


ON THAT STIFLING AFTERNOON, AFTER THE GUNSHOTS AND A FEW CRIES OF PAIN.



A STRANGE SILENCE DESCENDED OVER THE GROCERY STORE

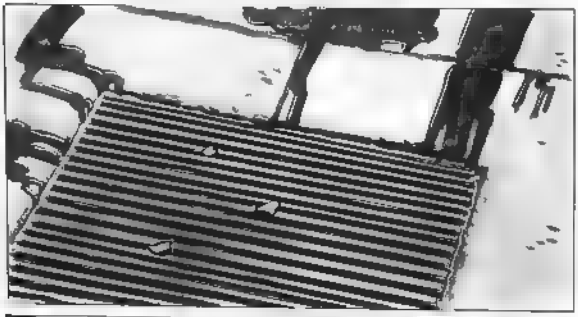
IT WASN'T REALLY SILENCE BECAUSE THERE WAS SOME MINDLESS SITCOM ON THE TV AND FROM THE BACK OF THE SHOP CAME THE LOW GROWL OF A TIRED OLD REFRIGERATOR



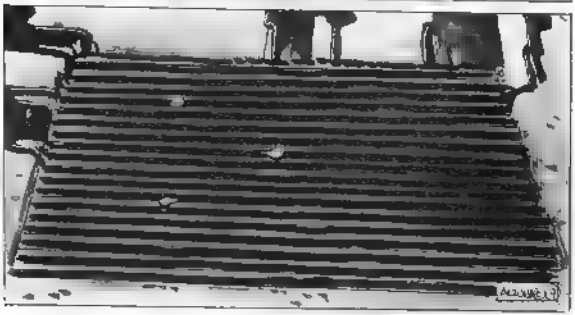
THE BLOOD FROM THE DEAD MEN, WHO WERE ALL SO DIFFERENT

GRADUALLY BLENDED TOGETHER

FLOWING DOWN INTO THE SAME SEWER

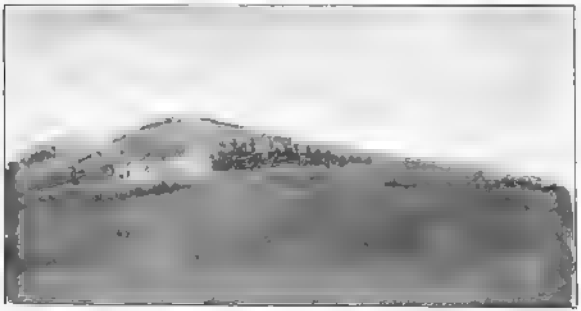


FOR CHRISSAKE, MEAN, WITH SUCH A WIDE ARRAY OF MULTI-COLORED CONTAINERS, THE BLOOD THAT RAN OUT ALL OF THEM WAS RED!



SOON SIRENS WERE HEARD OUTSIDE.

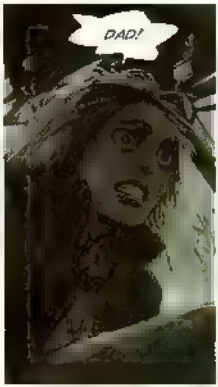
NIGHT FELL OVER THE CITY LIKE A WET BLANKET AND THE LIGHTS FLICKERED ON



MAKING ONE WORD CLEARLY VISIBLE

...FAITHFUL EDNA IT'S SPIDERY ... YOU COULD BREAK YOUR NECK!

AND END UP AS HOT LUNCH FOR THE SPIDER-FLIES


DAD!

...SOMETHING WRONG?

HEY! TAKE IT EASY WAIT FOR ME!
THE YOKS! THEY'RE TALKING TO ME. THEY'RE NOT ALL DEAD! WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING!
CUT IT STOP WITH YOUR RAVING JAN. YOU SEE THAT WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF THIS MESS AS SOON AS WE CAN?
WE HAVE TO FIGURE OUT WHAT WE SHOULD DO
BEFORE THEY SHOT US!

" AND TAKE LARRMS TO DO ABSOLUTELY NOTHING ???
RRAARGH! AT THIS RRHATE THEY'LL NEVRRRH RRHUMMOTE ME TO "CHIEF OF LATRRRHINES" RRRO ?! ARRR?
NO! "
AHA!
COME OUT AND FIGHT LIKE A DNARRRHA!
AH. SO YOU WANT TO PLAY AT BEING BIG? BUGGERRHNS WITH ME?
AH... YOU'RRE UP AGAINST THE RRHEIGNING CHAMPION.

STARING AT GRINNING SKULLS?
I DON'T KNOW! I THOUGHT THAT
S. NOW CAN YOU EXPLAIN HOW, AFTER CAREFULLY FOLLOWING YOUR PLANS WE FIND OURSELVES
IF THE MAPS FROM YOUR SYMBOL ARE CORRECT THIS GIZMO HAS TO BE AN ELEVATOR
ANYWAY WE DON'T REALLY HAVE A CHOICE!
OK
AT THREE WE JUMP
1
2
3
BAH

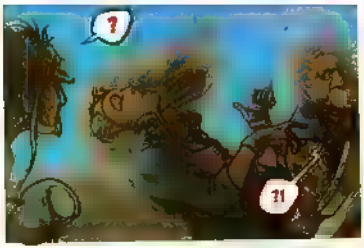
STOP!
DON'T TOUCH A THING! I'M ON TOP OF THIS
AS I SEE IT, THERE ARE THE CONTROLS. HAVE FAITH IN ME
AFTER ALL, I AM THE MECHANIC
OH! A BUTTON! WEIRD. IT FEELS MUSHY
NO! DON'T DO THAT!
DON'T DO WHAT?!
I NEVER GET TO DO ANYTHING AROUND HERE!
AARGHH! ?!
LOOK! THE GLASS... IT'S DISSOLVING?!

A NOW D MODULE. NOW I'VE SEEN EVERYTHING
BIP.
YUMPPH!
SLAP
ARRGGH!
HELP!!
THE FACTED STATE
MADE PARADISEE TERMINALE OF THE TOWER
ALMOST EVERYTHING
TLACK

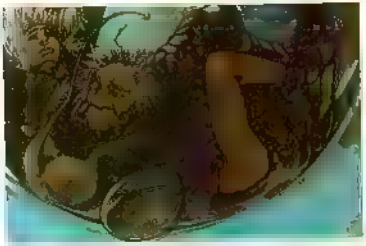
INCREDIBLE! THEY HAVE MANAGED TO MAKE THE ELEVATOR WORK!
THEY MUST HAVE THE SACRED SYMBOL.
HEY FANGO WAKE UP!
YOU SEEM TO KEEP FALLING ASLEEP!
ZZZ
ALTHOUGH I DON'T WE CAN CONTROL EVERYTHING WITH THESE BUTTONS
ARE YOU REALLY IN CONTROL OF THIS THING
OR IS IT CONTROLLING YOU?
I THINK I COULD STEER IT BUT IT SEEMS TO KNOW WHERE TO GO

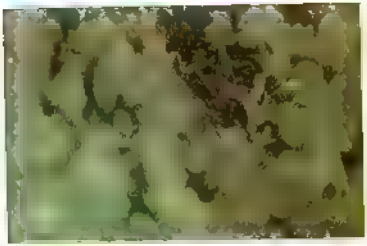
HEY! THAT'S FUNNY. THE BUBBLE'S GROWN BACK
JUST SEEMS TO BE GOING HIGHER AND HIGHER
LOOK THIS WAY THERE'S
WHAT?
SOME KIDS
WOAH
I LIKE KIDS TOO. BUT I WISH ONE COULD NOT WHY BIP

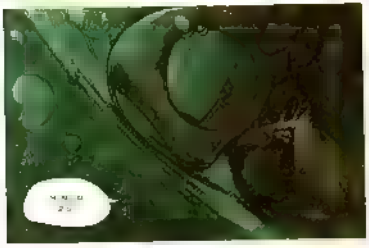
WE SEEM TO HAVE ARRIVED AT THE TOP!
NOPE I DON'T THINK SO!
A LAKE!?
WAIT! SOMEONE'S TALKING TO ME
Erin
Have seen my Mom
Erin


?
?!

HEY! WE'RE FALLING!





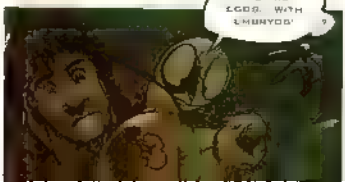


OUCH! OUCH! OUCH! MY POOR BONES.

ERNA!

YOU OKAY?!

YOU GUYS! DO YOU SEE WHA I THINK I SEE?!
WHAT. NOW?!


THEY'RE EGGS. WITH EMBRYOS!

BUT HOW HORRIBLE.

LOOK! THAT'S WHAT'S LAYING THE EGGS!
SO, MY LOVELY! WHAT DO YOU WANNA DO NOW? JUST YOU THINK IT'S TIME WE ALL GOT THE HELL OUTTA HERE?
SO, GO!

ARRGH!

GASP!

HERE THEY ARE, BUT THERE'S ONLY TWO OF THEM.

I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE OTHER ONE LATER!

I'M STILL ALIVE!

I'M

I'M AFRAID!

EXTINCTION
NOW, SOMEONE WITH
SPECIES SUCH AS OURS
DESERVES NOT TO
HAVE LOTS OF COUNTRY AND TO
PROMOTE OR PROPAGATE THEIR
GENES. SOME NEW ECONOMIC
POWER OR DOMINATION.
WHO, THAT?
WHAT DO YOU
WANT OF ME?

THAT
WHO CREATED
THE INTERFACE THAT
SPERMATOZOIDS INTO
THE EGGS WHICH ONCE
FERTILIZED WERE THEN
PUT INTO WOMEN
IMPREGNATED TO GIVE
BIRTH TO HUMAN
BEINGS
THEY
SPERMATOZOIDS
BY WOMEN
USE
TECHNOLOGY
ONE DAY
THEY DISCOVERED
MILLIONS AND THEY
WANTED FOR CLONES
AND

EXTINCTION
NOW, SOMEONE WITH
SPECIES SUCH AS OURS
DESERVES NOT TO
HAVE LOTS OF COUNTRY AND TO
PROMOTE OR PROPAGATE THEIR
GENES. SOME NEW ECONOMIC
POWER OR DOMINATION.
WHO, THAT?
WHAT DO YOU
WANT OF ME?

I DESPERATELY NEED A FERTILE OVULE TO ENGENDER A NEW YOUNG QUEEN MOTHER WHO WILL BE ABLE TO ESCAPE FROM THIS CURSED TOWER AND RETURN TO THE OPEN SEA
YOU ARE THE ONLY FERTILE WOMAN THAT I COULD FIND
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
LET YOURSELF MELD INTO ME A WEEK FROM NOW I SHALL DIE AND THE YOUNG QUEEN YOU WILL BE ABLE TO ESCAPE TOWARD THE SEA THROUGH THE DRAINAGE SYSTEM
HAVE NO FEAR I SHALL NOT HARM YOU
I SHALL GENTLY EXTRACT A SINGLE OVULE FROM YOUR BODY YOU WILL ONLY FEEL A LITTLE BIT OF WARMTH

WHERE AM I?
CRA
CRA
CRA
CRA
CRA
CRA
CRA

ERHA!
COME ERHA...
COME TO ME...
T... TUSAR?!
HAVE YOU BEEN A GOOD GIRL?
YOU KNOW THAT YOU'RE ON TRIAL?

I DID NOT KNOW...
...BUT I KNOW THAT IT WILL...
...ALL BE OVER SOON!
END?